

NARVOS

NATIONAL ALLIANCE FOR REGENERATIVE VEG OIL SECTOR



Solidaridad **SOPA**

VOI- II

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NEWSLETTER

**National Alliance for Regenerative Veg Oil
Sector (NARVOS)**

Editorial Note

Dear Readers,

Welcome to another edition of NARVOS Newsletter. The first edition of the NARVOS Newsletter introduced the National Alliance for the Regenerative Vegetable Oil Sector as a multi-stakeholder platform taking shape around a shared vision for regenerative and sustainable vegetable oil systems in India.

This edition reflects a more grounded phase of that journey.

While NARVOS continues to evolve as a coordination platform, meaningful progress is already visible at the field level—particularly through EU-India partnership initiatives, where regenerative practices are being tested, refined, and demonstrated in real farming conditions. These on-ground activities are generating early lessons on soil health, input efficiency, and climate-responsive crop management, especially in standing rabi crops.

The focus of this edition is therefore practical and evidence-led. Rather than highlighting structures or announcements, it brings attention to what is happening in the fields, what farmers and practitioners are observing, and how regenerative approaches are being applied within existing cropping systems.

As NARVOS gradually moves from formation to function, these field experiences will play a critical role in shaping future collaboration, learning, and scale. This edition offers a snapshot of that process—early, evolving, and firmly rooted in practice.

Dr Suresh Motwani
Programme Lead



Across most EU-India partnership supported pilot demonstration plots, mustard and wheat dominate the current rabi landscape. January marks a critical growth phase for both crops—when soil health, moisture availability, and nutrient management begin to directly influence yield outcomes. Field observations during this month highlight how regenerative practices are shaping crop performance, input efficiency, and resilience at the ground level.

What The Fields Are Telling Us

Insights from Demonstration Plots



KEY FIELD ACTIVITIES ALIGNED WITH REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE

Soil Moisture and Irrigation Management

Demonstration plots with improved soil organic matter and minimal disturbance are showing better moisture retention, allowing farmers to optimise irrigation schedules.

- Reduced irrigation frequency in wheat fields
- Improved plant turgidity in mustard during dry spells
- Enhanced water infiltration and reduced surface runoff

Field message: Healthy soils are reducing water stress while improving crop stability.

CROP STATUS IN JANUARY

- Mustard: Flowering to early pod formation stage
- Wheat: Tillering to early jointing stage

At these stages, crops require balanced nutrition, stable soil moisture, and close pest surveillance—making January a key intervention window.



Need-Based Nutrient Management

January top-dressing decisions reflect a shift from blanket fertiliser use to soil-test-based & crop-stage-specific application.

- Balanced nitrogen application in wheat
- Integration of bio-inputs and organic supplements in mustard
- Lower fertiliser use without visible nutrient deficiency

Field message: Efficient nutrient use is maintaining crop vigour while lowering cultivation costs.



Pest and Disease Monitoring

With mustard in the flowering stage, farmers are prioritising regular field scouting before chemical intervention.

- Use of sticky traps and pheromone traps
- Preference for neem-based and biological solutions
- Increased presence of beneficial insects

Field message: Preventive monitoring and biological control are reducing dependence on chemical sprays.

Crop Canopy and Root Development

Field walks indicate stronger crop architecture where regenerative practices are followed.

- Better tillering in wheat under residue-retained fields
- Uniform mustard flowering linked to improved soil aeration
- Stronger root systems under reduced soil disturbance

Field message: Improved soil health is visibly reflected in crop structure and growth.



Crop Diversity and Residue Management

Plots with crop rotation, intercropping, or residue retention are demonstrating added resilience.

- Reduced weed pressure due to soil cover
- Improved nutrient cycling from previous legume crops
- More stable soil temperatures during winter

Field message: Diversity and soil cover are strengthening field-level resilience.



What January is Showing Us

January field observations reinforce a clear conclusion:

Regenerative practices are delivering practical benefits—better moisture management, efficient nutrient use, and healthier crops—within existing mustard and wheat systems.

As crops move towards grain filling, these early-season decisions will play a decisive role in yield stability and farm profitability.

Farmer Observations from the Field

Farmers participating in demonstration plots are increasingly linking crop performance with soil management practices.

Common feedback includes:

- “We needed fewer irrigations this season.”
- “The crop looks uniform without extra fertiliser.”
- “Pest pressure is manageable with regular observation.”

These insights reflect a growing shift from input-driven farming to system-based management.

MARKET AND INDUSTRY LENS



Where Markets Are Moving

Regenerative Agriculture & Edible Oil Policy Watch

As edible oil policy evolves in India, there is a growing space where regenerative agriculture principles intersect with national missions and climate-focused programmes. While policies are still largely oriented towards production and self-reliance, several strategic directions align with regenerative outcomes — particularly in soil health, crop diversification, and sustainable intensification



Although the mission's core focus is on productivity, seed systems, and market linkages, several elements are naturally supportive of regenerative practices:

Cluster-based interventions with FPOs, cooperatives, and extension services encourage dissemination of good agronomic practices that can reduce input intensity and improve soil functioning.

- The mission explicitly includes soil health testing and data-driven nutrient management as part of its implementation guidance — paving the way for balanced inputs and reduced environmental pressure.
- Expansion of oilseed area through intercropping and diversification into fallow lands resonates with regenerative goals related to crop rotations and biodiversity.

This policy, while not labelled “regenerative,” touches several regenerative-aligned outcomes: improved soil health, diversified cropping, and reduced reliance on heavy fertiliser use — especially if implementation emphasises field-level practices and farmer training.

National Mission on Edible Oils - Oilseeds (NMEO-OS)

The Union Cabinet approved the National Mission on Edible Oils – Oilseeds (NMEO-OS) in 2024 for implementation from 2024-25 to 2030-31 with a ₹10,103 crore outlay to boost domestic oilseed production and reduce import dependence. The mission aims to increase primary oilseed output from around 39 million tonnes to 69.7 million tonnes by 2030-31 through targeted interventions.

Alignment with State Oilseed Missions

State governments are critical partners in turning national missions into field realities. Various states — from Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh to Odisha — are tailoring approaches to expand oilseed cultivation, promote high-quality seeds, and strengthen value chains.

Many states are also integrating practice-level training, advisory services, and crop diversification strategies that implicitly support regenerative agriculture principles such as soil conservation, balanced nutrition, and crop sequencing.



Climate & Soil Health Priorities

Soil and climate considerations are increasingly prominent in India's broader agricultural policy environment, offering foundational support for regenerative thinking:

- The Soil Health Card Scheme — a nationwide programme providing personalised soil nutrient data and fertiliser recommendations — encourages site-specific nutrient management and balanced input use, essential elements of regenerative systems.
- National climate strategies, embedded in frameworks like the National Action Plan for Climate Change (NAPCC) and climate-resilient agriculture initiatives, emphasise soil conservation, adaptive management, and resource-efficient practices.
- Research and policy analysis increasingly point to the need for climate-smart practices (e.g., improved soil carbon, erosion control, water use optimisation) to sustain productivity while mitigating climate risks — a core rationale for regenerative approaches.
- At the ground level, integrating soil health insights with NMEO-OS interventions can support regenerative outcomes — such as reduced input inefficiencies, enhanced soil organic matter, and resilience to climate variability.

Policy-Practice Intersections Key Signals



Soil health and nutrient targeting are being embedded into oilseed missions, creating pathways for regenerative nutrient management practices at scale.

Cluster interventions and FPO engagement under NMEO-OS enhance farmer access to knowledge, enabling adoption of sustainable practices beyond mere production.



State-driven implementation offers flexibility to prioritise regenerative solutions, such as diversified cropping and intercropping systems, tailored to local agro-ecologies.



Soil and climate policy frameworks present enabling conditions for regenerative agriculture to gain traction across edible oil value chains in the long term





Bio-Resource Center: A community Hub for farmer-led Bio-Inputs under

The Bio-Resource Center (BRC) initiative functions as a local learning and storage hub, where farmers come together to learn, prepare, and access traditional and natural bio-inputs for oilseed and other crops. Rooted in farmer knowledge and practical experience, the BRC strengthens the shift towards low-cost, chemical-free, and regenerative farming practices.

At the Bio-Resource Center, farmers are trained in the preparation, use, and storage of bio-inputs such as Kanda Tonic, Pancha Patti Kadha, Brahmastra, and other locally relevant formulations. These bio-inputs are prepared using easily available natural ingredients, making them affordable and adaptable for small and marginal farmers.

A Space for Learning by Doing

The BRC acts as a hands-on classroom, where nearby farmers regularly visit to:

- Learn step-by-step preparation methods of bio-inputs
- Understand correct dosage, timing, and application in oilseed crops
- Observe field-level results and exchange experiences with fellow farmers
- Access stored bio-inputs during critical crop stages

This peer-to-peer learning approach builds confidence among farmers and encourages wider adoption across villages.

Strengthening Regenerative Practices at the Farm Level

By promoting bio-inputs like Kanda Tonic for plant vigor, Pancha Patti Kadha for pest management, and Brahmastra for controlling sucking and chewing pests, the Bio-Resource Center helps farmers:

- Reduce dependence on chemical pesticides and fertilizers
- Lower cultivation costs
- Improve soil health and crop resilience
- Move steadily towards regenerative agriculture

How the Bio-Resource Center Changed Kamlesh Farming Journey

Anshul, a Class 12 student with agriculture as one of his subjects, is the son of Kamlesh Dhakad, an associate farmer of EU-INDIA Partnership Programme from Vardha village in Vidisha district. Though still in school, Anshul actively supports his father on their 1.5-acre farm and speaks with confidence about the value of the Bio-Resource Center.

Like many smallholder farmers, Kamlesh and Anshul were initially skeptical about using bio-inputs. To test their effectiveness, they decided to apply them on just half an acre where they cultivated sponge gourd. Through the Bio-Resource Center, they accessed bio-inputs such as Kanda Tonic, Panch Patti Ark, and Jeevamrit, learning their preparation and use with guidance from the Solidaridad team.





The results were beyond their expectations. “This is the first time we have seen such a healthy and high-quality vegetable crop using bio-inputs,” Anshul shares proudly. The sponge gourd crop was harvested every third day, yielding nearly 30 kg per harvest. Over the course of a month, this translated into a profit of ₹25,000.

The quality of the produce caught everyone’s attention. Neighbours and buyers repeatedly asked about the inputs used. Their sponge gourd sold at ₹40 per kg, significantly higher than the usual market price of ₹25–30 per kg.

“Bio-inputs are meant for smallholders like us,” says Anshul. “They cost almost nothing to make, yet the results are outstanding. Seeing this success has inspired me to become a farmer in the future and continue these sustainable practices.”

For Anshul and his father, the Bio-Resource Center is not just a facility—it is a turning point that strengthened their belief in regenerative agriculture and a more secure farming future.





GROUND STORIES

Not Today, But Definitely Someday

Chander Singh: From experimentation to confidence in regenerative agriculture

"I could feel that my soil was becoming harder every year. Costs were increasing, diseases were rising, and still I was dependent on chemicals. I knew something had to change—not immediately, but someday."

— **Chander Singh Dhangar**

Sagoni village in Sehore district of Madhya Pradesh faces chronic water scarcity. Limited irrigation, erratic rainfall, and declining soil health have made farming increasingly challenging. For many farmers, chemical inputs became the default response—ensuring short-term yields but gradually weakening the land and increasing production costs.

Chander Singh Dhangar, a farmer owning 5.5 acres of land, has lived this reality for years.





Like most farmers in the region, he practiced chemical-based farming for decades, growing soybean during the Kharif season and wheat in Rabi. On every acre, he applied nearly three sacks of urea, costing around ₹1,200, along with super phosphate and DAP. While yields remained stable, expenses kept rising, and the soil slowly lost its natural strength.

Two years ago, Chander Singh became associated with the EU-India Partnership Programme, where he now serves as a lead farmer. Yet even then, regenerative agriculture felt uncertain. Leaving behind long-standing practices was not easy—for him, or even for the Solidaridad team working on the ground.

Convincing farmers to move away from decades of chemical dependency is one of the biggest challenges in promoting regenerative agriculture. This is where demonstration plots became a turning point. Instead of asking farmers to shift their entire land, Solidaridad encouraged them to experiment on just one acre—allowing them to observe, compare, and decide based on real results.

For Chander Singh, this opportunity came during the Rabi season of 2024.

He agreed to adopt regenerative practices on a one-acre wheat demonstration plot, under the guidance of Solidaridad's technical team.

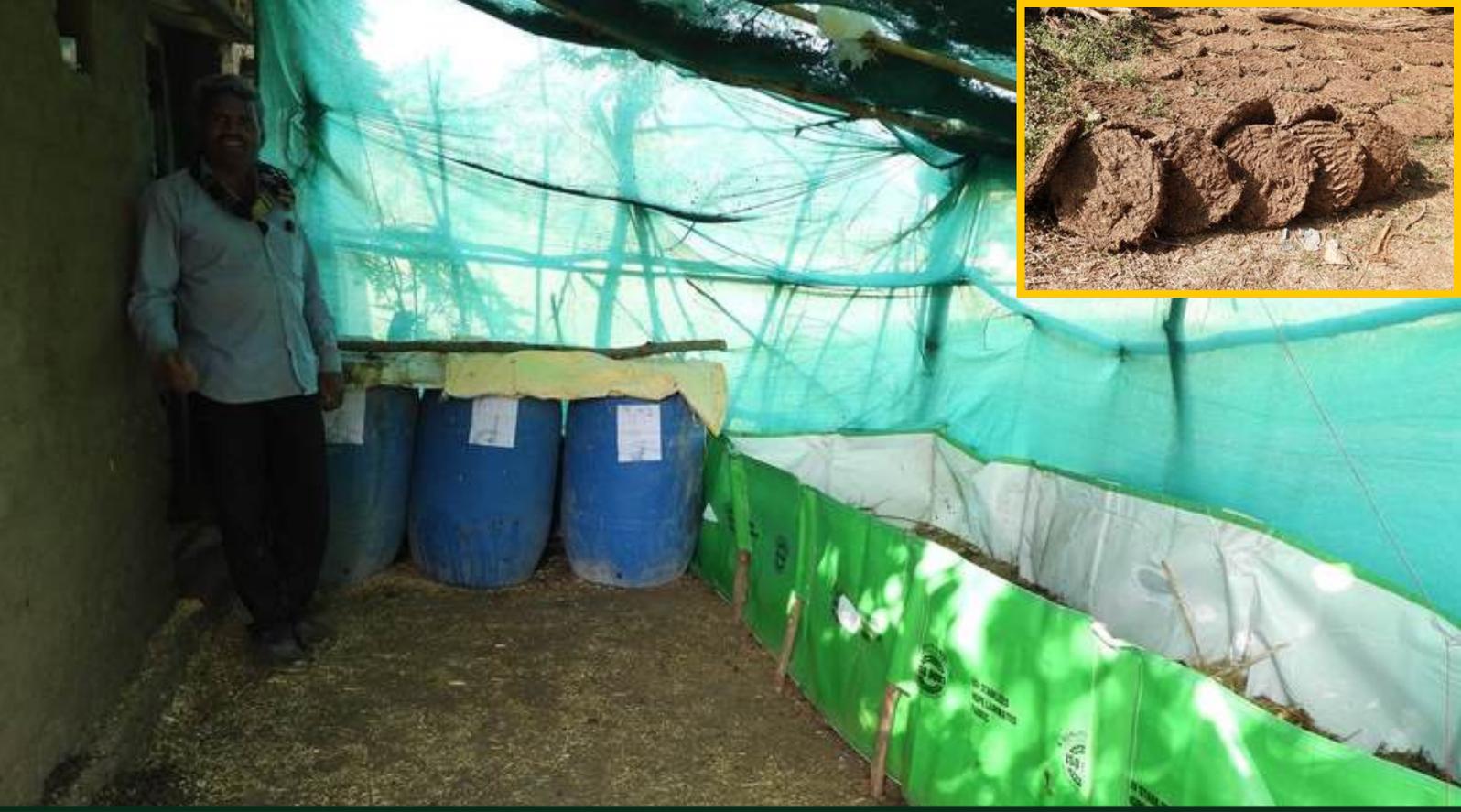
Chemical inputs were replaced with ½ quintal of biochar, neem cake, and vermicompost. He sowed wheat variety 8759, procured through the Bharatkhand Consortium of Farmer Producer Company Limited, and managed the crop with only two irrigations.

At harvest, the plot produced 12 quintals per acre—slightly lower than his conventionally farmed wheat. But the real difference emerged when he compared costs and soil condition.

This marked his moment of belief.

In the chemical field, Chander Singh had spent nearly ₹4,800 per acre on urea, pesticides, insecticides, and herbicides. In the regenerative plot, he saved three sacks of urea and avoided chemical pesticides altogether. The soil felt different—softer, healthier, and more alive.

Encouraged by this experience, he applied the same principles during the soybean season. The outcome was striking. From one acre, he harvested 6 quintals of soybean, compared to just 1 quintal the previous year under chemical farming.



Chander Singh realised that regenerative farming is not rocket science, nor does it require advanced technical expertise. It begins with understanding the local geography, climate, and cropping patterns, and making small, thoughtful changes.

In his wheat fields, he planted mustard as a border crop—a simple practice that helped assess mustard’s suitability in the region while acting as a natural insect trap, drawing pests away from the main crop and reducing the need for insecticides. Similarly, in soybean fields, he used marigold as a border crop, naturally protecting the crop and preventing unnecessary chemical sprays.

These small interventions not only reduced input dependency but also helped protect and regenerate the soil.

Inspired by the results, Chander Singh took another step forward. With support from the Solidaridad team, he began preparing bio-inputs on his own farm and established a bio-resource centre, turning his land into a local learning space for regenerative agriculture.

Today, his journey is influencing many others.

Seeing his progress, 30–35 nearby farmers from surrounding villages have expressed interest and begun adopting regenerative practices on their own land. Like Chander Singh, they are starting small—using demonstration plots, observing results, and gradually building confidence.

Chander Singh’s journey is not about instant transformation. It is about trust, learning, and proof—proof that meaningful change may not happen today, but with the right support and belief, it will definitely happen someday.

“From this year, I have already started regenerative farming on half of my land. I believe that in the next two to three years, I will convert my entire farm into a regenerative farm,” he says.

He adds with gratitude:

“The Solidaridad team gave me confidence and the right technical knowledge. Without proper guidance and the right methods, it would have been very difficult to adopt regenerative farming.”

“We can all see that diseases are increasing because of chemical-based farming. I could feel my soil degrading year after year. That is why I decided to change.”

VOICES FROM THE STAKEHOLDERS



BUY-BACK INTENT FROM INDUSTRY

“Farmers will adopt regenerative agriculture more confidently when they know their produce will be readily absorbed by the market and valued fairly. While price premiums for regenerative produce are still evolving and largely shaped by policy, the industry has a clear role to play in ensuring market confidence.

The Solvent Extractors’ Association of India remains committed to supporting the procurement of such produce through its network of nearly 800 member companies. Creating visible market pathways is essential to encouraging farmers to transition towards more sustainable and regenerative production systems.”

— Dr. B.V. Mehta

Executive Director, Solvent Extractors’ Association of India (SEA)

THE BALANCED APPROACH OF REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE

“What I appreciate most about regenerative agriculture is its balanced approach. After years of chemical-based farming, our soils need time to recover. Regenerative farming does not demand an immediate elimination of chemicals; instead, it encourages using them only where necessary in the initial stages and gradually reducing their quantity. I have been following regenerative practices for the past two years, and I can now see clear improvements on my farm. The soil has become softer, input costs have reduced, and soil testing shows improved organic carbon levels. I believe that within the next two to three years, I will be able to transition my entire farm to regenerative agriculture.”

— Bhagvat Singh Kushwah

Lead Farmer, Vardha Village, Vidisha District



POLICY THOUGHT

Regenerative Agriculture as a Policy Enabler for Edible Oils

India's edible oil strategy is anchored in increasing domestic production, strengthening seed systems, and reducing import dependence through initiatives such as the National Mission on Edible Oils – Oilseeds (NMEO-OS). While these efforts focus on scale and productivity, their long-term success will depend on the resilience of farming systems, particularly in rain-fed and resource-constrained regions.

Regenerative agriculture offers a policy-aligned pathway to strengthen these systems. Although not yet explicitly defined within edible oil policies, regenerative practices naturally reinforce existing policy priorities—soil health improvement, efficient nutrient management, water conservation, and climate resilience. Instruments such as the Soil Health Card Scheme, intercropping and diversification strategies, and state-level extension programmes already create enabling conditions for regenerative approaches to be applied on the ground.

Early field observations from pilot initiatives suggest that practices like reduced soil disturbance, residue retention, diversified cropping, and bio-inputs can support stable crop performance while lowering input dependency and farmer risk. These outcomes directly complement policy goals related to sustainable intensification and farmer viability, without requiring new schemes or structural changes.

From a policy perspective, regenerative agriculture should be seen not as an additional programme, but as a system enabler—strengthening the effectiveness of existing missions through better soil function, resource efficiency, and long-term productivity.

As implementation frameworks evolve, integrating regenerative principles through advisory services, capacity building, and outcome-based monitoring can help ensure that edible oil self-reliance is achieved in a manner that is economically viable, environmentally responsible, and durable over time.

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